

Name of Professional: Hollie Morris

Profession: Occupational Therapy

Company: Covenant Hand Therapy

Date of Interview: December 12, 2017

Assessment:

The Pathway to Independence

A branch of Occupational Therapy not often acknowledged is hand therapy.

However, as Hollie Morris of Covenant Hand Therapy explains, “hands are the pathway to independence.” While many aspects of OT focus on broad physical activities, hand therapy focuses solely on the hands, arms, and shoulders in order to increase independence and productivity in patients. Additionally, going into the ISM experience, I presumed that most of my work would involve working with people with preexisting conditions, but hand therapy has revealed to me that a great deal of OT is based on rehabilitation after injuries. Through my informational interview with Hollie Morris, I had this breakthrough in my understanding, and I developed a more detailed knowledge of the procedures followed by Occupational Therapists in the case of a hand injury.

The most enlightening thing I learned from this interview was the process of recovery for a specific patient of Morris. The woman was a nurse, and while in practice, she had a brachial plexus injury through her hand and arm and received a wrist fracture. She ended up developing Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, where the complex nervous system becomes so over-stimulated and heightened that she constantly receives pain signals throughout the injured area. Morris has used numerous treatment methods to help her improve, including massages, abdominal weights, and nerve block treatment. The

woman has had a lot of progress since the beginning of her treatment, but most patients with injuries like this one spend several years in the treatment process. Her situation is very unique because prior to her injury, she had no preexisting conditions that made her more prone to an injury that would require Occupational Therapy for recovery. She was a very productive and active pediatric nurse, and the work of therapists like Morris has helped her to get back to her original level of productivity and physical comfort.

It was also very revealing to develop an understanding of the typical workday of an Occupational Therapist specializing in hand therapy. Some specific activities performed in Morris's typical day include hour-long treatment sessions, ultrasounds and "foto-therapy," manual massages, exercises for motor coordination, hand measurements, and the creation of home exercise and long-term treatment plans. These activities much more closely resemble Physical Therapy than I was anticipating. However, Morris admits that psychology and soft skills are an equally crucial aspect of the daily experience. Psychological interaction is the main distinguishing factor between Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy, so it is very important that even hand therapy has elements of emotional connection and interaction with patients. Should I pursue an OT career like hand therapy, it is very important that I develop an understanding of the psychological basis of hands and the rehabilitation process that Morris describes to me.

Overall, this experience has given me the most specific knowledge of application that I have received from an informational interview thus far. I received a piece of paper with a diagram of different therapeutic exercises so that I can refer to them in my future studies. Morris was also very conversational with her co-workers, trying to ensure that I received the most specific and accurate knowledge and examples of terminology used in

the workplace. I will use this foundational understanding of hand therapy in practically any practice of Occupational Therapy that I may pursue because it is transferable to virtually any type of rehabilitation-based therapy.

Interview Notes:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eavRyjng7y778IoPYwtMh9OfCGePn92R/view?usp=sharing>